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ABSTRACT

A systems model, developed by David Easton, is used to provide some clarity to many of the issues involved with collective bargaining in American higher education. The model serves as an illustration for understanding how decisions are made, and as a conceptual frame of reference to analyze the political situation. The issues surrounding collective bargaining encompass the political atmosphere in which the university's survival is challenged in the face of the changing nature and function of academic management, governance, and leadership in higher education settings. Further, there are the internal issues of increased faculty authority in policy making, administrative loss of this authority, the future direction of the university, and the changes in decision-making and control. The model provides a view of competing collective bargaining forces and interests. Survival in an era of turbulence, it is suggested, will require flexibility and adaptability from all major players: faculty, administrators, students, and society. The key to this survival will emanate from the feedback loop, the line of information, and will depend upon the balance and oscillation of the inputs and outputs of information into and through the institution. Contains 15 references. (GLR)

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COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN FOUR YEAR INSTITUTIONS: A FACULTY PERSPECTIVE VIEWED THROUGH THE EASTON MODEL

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Collective bargaining in American higher education has been the object of much discussion during the past decade. Papers, books, and articles have been written from the administrative, faculty, and student points-of-view (1). Writers have analyzed, appraised, observed, and surveyed the issue (2). Historical accounts have been written, and case studies from particular institutions have been documented (3).

The political aspects of the problem are clear. They focus upon university survival in the face of the changing nature and function of academic management, governance and leadership in higher educational settings. Garbarino terms this as "the challenge of institutional change", involving changes in the structure, function, and accountability of the institution (4).

The internal issues of increased faculty authority in policy making, administrative loss of this authority, the future direction of the university, and the changes in decision-making and control are all crucial aspects of the collective bargaining issue. Furthermore, the external issues of fiscal support, perceived perversity of an anti-intellectual movement in American society, and the relationship between the state legislature and the university administration cannot be overlooked.

Previous Studies

Several studies of faculty motivation for embracing professional unions have been completed. Baldridge notes that faculty are turning to unions for two reasons. Firstly, to establish stronger faculty participation in institutions that never had strong traditions of faculty governance. Secondly, to preserve a faculty role in governance where it once was strong, but has recently been challenged. (5) Garbarino observes that faculty organize for status in institutional governance, job security, and other economic conditions (6). Based upon a study sponsored by the Stanford Project on Academic Governance, Kemerer and Baldridge found the prime concerns for faculty unionization to be job security and salary (7). The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education also studies the issue and identified prime reasons for faculty discontent to be salary, workloads, external authority, and institutional policies (8).

All of these studies serve as a basis for a deeper analysis and understanding of collective bargaining through the application of a model developed by David Easton.

The Easton Model

Easton challenges us to question how any political system can survive in a hostile environment. Using collective bargaining as an example, Easton might view the acceptance of

collective bargaining as the response to a system under stress. His model serves as an illustration for understanding how decisions are made, and as a conceptual frame of reference to analyze the political situation.

Figure 1 represents a schematic of the model. The system can be viewed as the university, inputs as faculty demands, outputs as administrative policies, feedback as evaluation and discussion; and the environment as the political culture or society-at-large.

Viewing this model, we can see that the environment provides energy to activate the system, and is dynamic. As it fluctuates, it creates new demands to be processed by the system.

Inputs arise, according to Easton, from within the system, or when deemed important by the environment. These inputs may be external or internal, and as they are fed into the system, they are transformed into outputs. Continuous inputs keep the system functioning, and serve to both shape and change it. Conflict can arise, and does, when the system cannot simultaneously satisfy all demands, or when demands exceed supports. Crucial is the role of the feedback loop which operates the system in the face of stress, and connects the decisions to the supports. If forces perform different activities simultaneously, and if the system is to maintain itself, mechanisms must be provided for harmony so that authoritative decisions (outputs) can result and the system can continue to function.

Examination of Collective Bargaining

Collective bargaining is one tool for changing and redistributing authority and decision-making processes in the university, permitting the system to function. Although the origin of the idea can be traced to the organization of the American Federation of Labor in 1886 (9), and the impetus to the 1939 National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act), it was not until the 1965 Hutchison Act in Michigan that public higher education personnel began to organize and bargain collectively.

Four years later in 1969, the New York Fair Employment Act, known as the Taylor Law, granted public employees in the multi-campus state and city university systems the right to organize and be represented (10). In 1970, with the Cornell University case, private educational institutions entered the picture. Shortly thereafter, the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Hawaii, Illinois, and Masachusettes passed public employee bargaining enabling legislation. By 1975, nearly one eighth of the over 3000 colleges and universities in the country had faculty bargaining agents (11). In 1978, legislation in California extended collective bargaining rights to the University of California and the California State University systems.

The history of the struggle for these rights is reflective of the faculty felt need to exercise more influence, control, and/or decision making power over economic conditions in higher education. This need exists, despite the results of a 1972 survey by Ladd and Lipset which suggests that faculty at less prestigious institutions are more conservative politiclly, and less receptive to unionization than their counterparts at elite, major research institutions (12).

Collective bargaining, by definition, is not a process where workers and managers (or faculty and administrators) join together to operate an enterprise on a shared authority/responsibility basis. Instead, it is a relationship...where parties have differentiated interests and needs (13). The inputs (demands), in Easton's terms, are internal. Needs of the faculty are varied and include an increased voice in governance, workload, salary, benefits, and job security.

Simultaneously at work upon the system are the external needs of the environment (society). These can change according to such factors as economics, and shifts in cultural values or societal pressures. Presently, there is competition for holding educational costs despite reduced federal and state aid, and limited operating budgets. In addition, we have been witness to an erosion of the fiduciary role which society has placed in higher education to guarantee socioeconomic mobility through educational

pursuits. Economic recession, an increase in salaries paid to trade union members, and increasing societal suspicion aimed at academic "elitists" who (supposedly) have few student contact hours and high salaries have all contributed to environmental pressures on the system. Added to this external force is an equally strong internal force rooted in professional self image. Faculty, usually at less elite institutions, seek a larger role in campus governance to be viewed as more than employees.

Easton has recognized that supports (external actions or internal states of mind) can also play a role. Such an example is the New York Board of Regents attitude that "the mandated process of collective bargaining is cumbersome, rigid, and unable by its very nature, to make administrative decisions crucial to the effective operation of a higher educational institution" (14).

Support can also be viewed as the absence of any visible sign of support withdrawal. That is to say, no actual public strikes by four year faculty, no significant work stoppages, property destruction, or faculty resignations to accept other appointments.

Administrative policies, or outputs in Easton's terms, can often avoid an imbalance of the system in light of strong faculty demands. Such actions as a state negotiated policy in the New Jersey state college system concerning layoffs, and a postponement of layoffs after the renegotiation of a contract in Pennsylvania (15) serve to show the politicization of

faculty, and the input-output balance Easton views as vital to the life of the system (16).

The regulatory feedback loop plays an important role in the homeostasis of the system. It serves as a thermostat to regulate the flow of energy through the system, provides a vehicle for the system to breathe and realize inputs and outputs, and serves to make judgments about the outputs. Such feedback may include public opinion, expressions of educational lobbyists and legislators, student concerns, and newspaper articles.

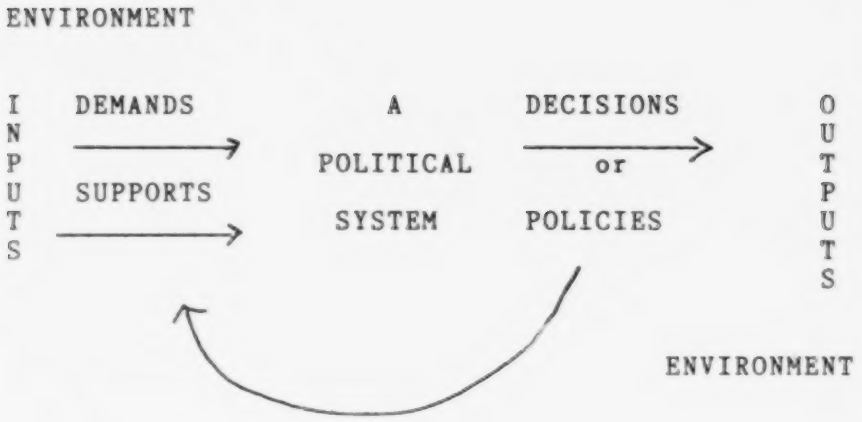
Conclusion

The long-term survival of the system (public colleges and universities) cannot be predicted. Institutional existence, however, can be studied and analyzed in an effort to clarify issues, manage conflicts, and equitably respond to change. Easton provides us with a model to view competing collective bargaining forces and interests.

Survival in an era of turbulence will require flexibility and adaptability from all major players -- faculty, administrators, students, and society. The key to this survival will emanate from the feedback loop, the line of information.

Survival of academic support will depend upon the balance and oscillation of inputs and outputs. The interaction may result in a deprivation of collective

bargaining, an obstruction to attaining it, or an administrative acceptance of it. From past histories of several public four year colleges and universities, it is likely that collective bargaining will not diminish. As Easton notes, "the primary goal of political analysis is to understand how political systems manage to persist through time" (17). His model furnishes us with a direction to do so.



The Easton Model
Figure 1

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